

CITY SONGS

BY

ST. JOHN ADCOCK

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CITY SONGS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE DIVINE
TRAGEDY

SELWYN & BLOUNT, LTD.

CITY SONGS

BY

Arthur ST. JOHN ADCOCK

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To
My Wife

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Most of these poems, now revised and largely rewritten, originally appeared in the *Spectator*, *Outlook*, *Speaker*, *Literature*, *Sunday Times*, and other journals, and in two books of mine that have passed out of remembrance—"From a London Garden" (*Nutt*), and "Songs of the World War" (*Cecil Palmer*).

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CITY SONGS

A SONG OF SHADOWS

THE City is thronged with shadows ;
In the shine of a sunny day,
See how they darken the pavements !—
Furtive, and hushed, and grey,
They peer from the brooding houses,
They flit through the streets below :
Every man has his shadow
That follows him to and fro.

And still when the day is sunless
They haunt the heart of the din ;
They dance at the heels of pleasure,
They run before folly and sin ;
Love, and honour, and beauty
They follow without a sound—
If the sun flames through for a moment,
See how they darken the ground !

The City is thronged with shadows,
And fear or thought of them lies
On pallid and weary faces,
In hungry and wistful eyes,
In brains that madden with sorrow,
In hearts that sadden and break—
Shadows of day and darkness
Nor day nor the dark can make.

Heedless each of the other,
We people the crowded way ;
We, who are also shadows
That pass with the passing day ;
And the glory and gold we garner,
What is it when all is done ?—
Every man has his shadow,
Though he walk in the shade or the sun.

TRANSFIGURED

LOVE took the sordid clay
And pierced its grossness as with lustral fire,
Fashioned a spirit from the common earth,
And crowned him lord and king with tears and mirth :
Love took the sordid clay
And shaped it to the god of her desire.

Then, ere he could resign
His white divinity and fall away
From that ineffable, ideal height
Whereto he had been lifted by Love's might :
Ere he could so resign
His godhead and return again to clay,

Death took the god of Love—
The god that was but man ashine with gleams
From inner fires that Love's own hand supplied—
And made him deathless who might else have died :
Death took the god of Love
And throned him in the heaven of her dreams.

THE CITY ASLEEP

DARKLY, under a drifting moon,
The streets lie empty of sound and life ;
Dawn of to-morrow come not soon !
Silent afar is yesterday's noon,
And the city forgets all sorrow and strife :
Oh, weary eyes and hearts that ache,
Sleep !—it is better to sleep than wake.

Here, where all day the air was loud
With a rattle of carts and jingle of cars
And murmur and laughter and tread of the crowd,
Are only the ruts the wheels have ploughed,
And rails that gleam with a glint of the stars,
And dreaming streets that the crowds forsake :
Sleep !—it is better to sleep than wake.

Toil and care to the day belong ;
To-morrow their tears will fall again,
But now for a little the weak are strong ;
Sleep knows nothing of right or wrong,
To-night feels naught of to-morrow's pain.
Sleep has a cup all thirst to slake :
Sleep !—it is better to sleep than wake.

Bare little feet grown hard on the stones,
Gaunt little hands that work has worn—
Oh, children, whom man enslaves or disowns,
Christ in His heaven has heard your moans
And touched you with happy death till morn.
Children, to-morrow your hearts shall ache :
Sleep !—it is better to sleep than wake.

Sorrow and sin crouch side by side,
Stived in their slum like swine in their pen ;
Sin ?—is it sorrow too sorely tried ?
A birth of the ashes where hope has died ?
Weary and outcast women and men,
Is it God that mars what His own hands make ?
Sleep !—it is better to sleep than wake.

Pride that dwells on the heights serene,
Virtue a-dream in your blissful bower,
With the blood of the poor are your walls unclean,
You dredge your wealth from their woes obscene ;
Could ye smell the filth of the root in the flower,
What joy in the scent thereof would you take ?
Sleep !—it is better to sleep than wake.

Palace and hovel, the prince and the throng
Are one in sleep 'neath the drifting moon ;
Now for a little the weak are strong,
Sleep knows nothing of right or wrong :
Dawn of to-morrow, come not soon !
Eyes that are tearless, and hearts that break,
Sleep !—it is better to sleep than wake.

THE EARTH-BOND

SINCE heaven above is God's, and earth below,
 He will not count it sin if I should love
 More than His unknown heaven above
 His dear earth that I know.

Meadow and sea and sky, and storm and shine,
 Glad voices that from croft and coppice call,
 The city loud with life, and all
 Of mortal and divine

That make His earth akin to you and me,
 Partner in hopes we live by or regret—
 Dear are they all, and dearer yet
 Some human two or three.

So that, as one in sleep may leave his bed
 And, blindly drawn to haunts he loved by day,
 Walk through a long familiar way
 With sure, unconscious tread,

CITY SONGS

In the last sleep, if I should dream and do
Even as thus some living sleeper might,
I shall stray, ghost-like, in the night
Home to the earth I knew.

MANHOOD

NOT till life's heat has cooled,
 Its headlong rush slowed to a quiet pace,
 And every purblind passion that had ruled
 Our noisier years, at last
 Spurs us in vain, for, weary of the race,
 We care no more who loses or who wins—
 Ah, not till all the best of life seems past
 The best of life begins.

To toil for only fame,
 Hand-clappings and soon-silent gusts of praise,
 For place, or power, or gold to gild a name
 Above the grave whereto
 All paths shall bring us, were to lose our days,
 We on whose ears youth's passing bell has tolled,
 In blowing bubbles even as children do,
 Forgetting we grow old.

But the world widens when
Such hope of trivial gain that ruled us lies
Broken among our childhood's toys, for then
We win to self-control
And mail ourselves in manhood, and there rise
Upon us from the vast and windless height
Those calmer thoughts that are unto the soul
What stars are to the night.

RETURNING

SPRING pipes an airy measure
That only he can play :

I caught its echo on the hill
This morning when the winds were still,
And the dreamy hollows began to fill
With a laughing rumour of day.

The hours of sleep are over,
The wintry night is past ;
Spring pipes his joyance far and near
And hope awakes in hearts that hear,
As the bud and leaf and bloom o' the year
Shall wake to his calling at last.

Adown through greening valleys,
Up over hill and wold—
Oh, youth and joy and love are met
In every note his lips beget !
And the world shall hear and follow him yet
And forget it is growing old.

THE PRIDE OF LAZARUS

LORD, I am poor and desolate !
The beggars at Thy outer gate,
Who cringe to purse-proud passers-by,
Are not more desolate than I.

The rich and proud have passed me there
And gone into Thy House of Prayer,
But I have stretched no pleading palms
To ask their pity or their alms.

And now, before the prayers begin,
I too, O Lord, will enter in
With heart elate, to praise and pray,
As thankful and as blessed as they.

They praise Thee in communion sweet
For silks they wear and flesh they eat ;
They thank Thee that Thou dost not flout
And leave them as the poor without.

I praise Thee that, for all my cares,
I have a pride that laughs at theirs ;
I thank Thee that, though frail I be,
My strength has bowed to none but Thee.

Curse me, O Lord, with want and ill,
But make my spirit strong, and still
Grant me, whate'er Thy hand denies,
A soul no swine-trough satisfies.

ENOUGH

MEN there be who lose their days
Toiling after empty praise ;
All they do they count as vain
Should the world their work disdain ;
If I hear but praise from thee,
That is praise enough for me.

Shall I flatter high or low,
Fearful lest I make a foe ?
Shall I sorrow without end
For the falseness of a friend ?
If I have but love from thee,
That is love enough for me.

Other worlds afar may rise,
Somewhere under other skies,
Other worlds and fairer still—
Sail and seek them they that will !
Wheresoe'er I walk with thee,
There is world enough for me.

Wiser men than I may say
Heaven is high and far away ;
Or may prove with reasonings rare
Heaven is neither here nor there ;
Here, where thou art, I with thee,
This is heaven enough for me.

THE CUP BEARER

IF beauty lived for ever, it would die,
And seen for ever would be seen no more ;
But always dying to be born again,
And always passing ere its spell can fail,
It still returns, a stranger to our eyes,
For ever young, for beauty lives with youth,
And wistful as some once familiar face
Our hearts remember though our eyes forget.

Ah, this year's rose may bud where last year's
died,
But last year's rose sleeps darkly in the dust ;
The phoenix soaring to another life
Dead in the ashes leaves a life as fair ;
So runs the wealth of all the world to waste,

For sunrise after sunrise comes and goes
 Leaving no trace of all its splendour gone ;
 And sunset after sunset, like the sea
 We cross in dreams to reach the gates of God,
 Ebbs far, and far, and lapses out of sight.
 Night through her billowy clouds upswings the
 moon

And blurs the dark with flying mists of fire,
 Or bares her fathomless deeps of slumbrous calm
 And silent hollows pebbled thick with stars,
 But wanes and is forgotten of the day.
 And love and hope and youth and gladness—all
 The bloom of life and sweetness of the year
 Flows past us ever to its bourne of death,
 Sings like a stream adown its sunny hill
 And, sighing through sunless places of the vale,
 Its depths and shallows haunted, overcast
 With earthly shadows and a shadowy heaven,
 Slips from our touch and flashes and is lost.

In that bright moment of its swift escape,
 Ere yet it spills into the sunset sea
 That far-off surges to the gates of God—

CITY SONGS

The immortal Hebe, captive among men,
Art dips her golden cup into the stream
And lifts the living water to our lips,
That we may taste how sweet is all we lose

A LOST IDEAL

NOW, when the day has withered from the skies,
And the dark world, in midnight black and
blind,

Drops like a dead star through the rainy wind,
What beaconing gleam within my soul can rise
To lure me toward the untrodden Heaven which lies
In that white polar fastness of the mind
We reach in dreams but waking never find,
If I no more may look into your eyes ?

Stoop, then, that Heaven above me I may see,
Lest I should stumble in the gloom and die ;
So far you seem above our pain and dearth,
You may tread downward many steps to me
Before your feet shall touch the mire ; but I—
My path is never higher than the earth.

THE TRADESMAN'S
CREED

NO petty thought of business snares
The cloistered hermit from his prayers :
He, while his calm years wax and wane,
Grows old, as trees do, without pain,
And at the last as gently dies
As 'twere but sleep that closed his eyes.

The soldier never frets his heart
With the mean cares of shop and mart :
No base and cunning masks conceal
His honest aim to stab and steal ;
He meets his foeman on the plain
And fairly slays him, or is slain.

But we who wilt in city airs
Grow old of childish griefs and cares,

We spend our health, our hopes, our life
In sordid and ignoble strife,
And buy and sell and lose—and gain
Nor peace nor glory for our pain.

The foes we fight with skulk unseen,
For envy wears a friendly mean ;
From whispered word and secret deed
We suffer, though we do not bleed,
Till, worn by trivial hates and jars,
We die of wounds that leave no scars.

Yet not for only this, we trust,
God called us out of sleep and dust
And then within us brought to birth
A spirit that seems not of earth,
That, all these mortal squalors past,
We may begin to live at last.

Is life like ours so dear a boon
That we should fear to die too soon ?—

The rather let us kneel and pray
Its end may not be far away,
And that the next life may be more
Worth living, and worth dying for !

LIGHT

WHEN you have sought God vainly other-
where—

Have closed your books, and hushed your idle prayer,
Too weary and heart-sore
To seek Him any more—

And, loving yet your human kindred, go,
Forgetting self, to work for them, nor know
By lowly paths benign
You reach the height divine :

Then, 'mid the living world where He hath wrought,
In some chance word, or thought, or glimpse of thought,
When all your search is past,
You may see God at last.

SAINT ANGELA OF
LONDON

IN crowded streets, a careless eye
Will miss the beauty of her face,
She is so easy to pass by
As, like the daylight, commonplace.

But O, the tears her love has dried,
The drooping faith her faith has steeled,
The broken lives, the wounded pride
Her pitying hands have bound and healed !

No meanest living thing can plead
For succour but she takes its part :
The poor, the weak, the suffering need
No other passport to her heart.

And so she walks in beauty drawn
From wells of inner grace and light—
The quiet beauty of a dawn
That comes wherever there is night.

THE DEAD LION

NOW you are dead and none can hope or fear
That you may help or harm him any more,
Some of your friends dismiss you with a sneer,
Who flattered you in fear or hope before.

They boldly speak the thoughts they only said
In prudent whispers, then, behind your back,
For seeing you are harmless, being dead,
They have the courage now they used to lack.

I, too, could bare your failings if I would
And gloat upon the weakness of the strong :
You were too human to be wholly good,
Too wholly human never to go wrong.

But when I salve the flotsam memory brings,
Your words and acts that I remember best
Are little gracious, friendly, fragrant things—
And, so remembering, I forget the rest.

THE PATHLESS WAY

YOU will not love me for a day,
Though I have loved you all the year ;
Your heart is deaf to all I say,
Nor ever knows that I am near.
We meet as we have met before,
And touching hands are far apart :
Though Love can bring me to your door,
I know no way to reach your heart.

But tossed on trackless seas the barque
Can find its road across the foam ;
The bird will cleave the untrodden dark
Nor miss the path that leads to home ;
And if I love you blindly yet,
And fail not as the days go past,
My heart may all its pain forget
And find the way to yours at last.

IMMORTALITY

I THAT had life ere I was born
Into this world of dark and light,
Waking as one who wakes at morn
From dreams of night :

I am as old as Heaven and Earth—
But sleep is death without decay,
And since each morn renews my birth,
I am no older than the day.

Old though my outward form appears,
Though it at last outworn shall lie,
This, that is servile to the years,
This is not I—

CITY SONGS

I, who outwear the form I take,
When I put off this garb of flesh,
Still in undying youth shall wake,
And somewhere clothe my life afresh.

E S T R A N G E M E N T

S O, then, to-day—for some few days, or years—
Perhaps for some few years—we say good-bye !
Yet, though we part as at the end of life,
I do not fear but we shall meet again.
I think I know your heart still, and I think,
When you have calm for thought, you will know mine ;
And thus our differing pathways shall converge
And bring us each to each again, at last.

—When we are sick and sad, and can forget
The sordid aims whose sorceries could raise
Envy and hate where only love had been—
When we are tired of changing newer friends
For newer, and still find them cold or false
And lose them with the veering of a wind—
Or find them friends indeed, but met so late,
So far beyond our youth, that every touch

Of memory makes them strangers who but dwell
Wintering in outer suburbs of our lives,
Alien to joys and sorrows we have known,
To those dear faces we shall know no more,
To those dead hands that you and I have clasped,
To all those buried hopes that once were ours—

In some such hour of loneliness, at last,
The past shall call us back, and we shall feel
Its wistful fingers catching at our hearts :
Then, when the years have broken down our pride,
We shall remember all that we have lost
And pause, forgetful of our smaller gains,
And so return, and, meeting in that past
Where you nor I can never live alone,
Find the old doors still open when we come,
The fire still glowing on the hearth we left,
And memory, with forgiveness in her eyes,
And the old love to bid us welcome home.

INDIFFERENCE

BREAK Thou my heart, dear Lord, lest I should
die :

The world's gross business has so husked and grown
Round it, and stricken it with death, that I—

Once touched by sorrows other lives have known—
I cannot even feel the griefs that are my own.

Thus living but as Thy dumb creatures do,

Careless, estranged from tears and inward smart,
This stark indifference, subtly creeping through,

Numbs and has cramped my life in every part,
And I shall die, dear Lord, unless Thou break my heart.

Scourge me with dread of what to-morrow brings,

With sharp regret, the soul's restorative ;
It is but death that feels no wintry stings

Nor any thrill that sunnier days can give :
Break Thou my heart, then, Lord, and let me live.

DAWN IN JUNE

I WAKE—or am I sleeping still ?
These morning ecstasies of light and song
Seem but as voices that to sleep belong
And if I wake may die, as a dream will.

I closed my eyes
On darkness, when no star was in the skies,
And, shrouded in my bed,
Elapsed to the blind silence of the dead—
Dead in a world as without life, and dumb,
As if the end of Time had come,
Save for a rustle of rain
Like softly falling dust upon the darkened pane.

And now, I wake—and there is no more night ;
My window is a living glory of light,

And from his leafy height beyond the lawn
I hear a blackbird singing in the dawn
As if all nights were gone for ever past
And heaven on earth at last.

THE CROWN OF FAILURE

WHEN you have lived your life,
When you have fought your last good fight
and won,

And the day's work is finished, and the sun

Sets on your darkening world and all its strife—
Ere the worn hands are tired with all they've done,
Ere the mind's strength begins to droop and wane,
Ere the first touch of sleep has dulled the brain,
Ere the heart's springs are slow and running dry—

When you have lived your life,
'Twere good to die.

If it may not be so,
If you but fight a fight you may not win,
See the far goal but may not enter in,

'Twere happier then to die, and not to know
Defeat—to die amid the rush and din,

Still striving, while the blood runs warm and fast
With glorious life ;—if you must fail at last,
Such end were best, with all your hopes and all
 Your spirit in its youth,
Then, when you fall.

Far better so to die,
Still toiling upward through the mists obscure,
With all things possible and nothing sure,
 Than to be touched with glory and passed by,
To win by chance fame that may not endure,
That dies and leaves you living, while you strive
With wasted breath to keep its flame alive,
And fan, with empty boasts and proud regrets,
 Remembrance of a name
The world forgets.

TRAVELLERS

COME, let us go a-roaming !
The world is all our own,
And half its paths are still untrod,
And half its joys unknown.

The way that leads to winter
Will lead to summer too,
For all roads end in other roads
Where we may start anew.

Hope's dead, but who would linger
To weep beside her bier,
And let the shadow of a night
Make night of all the year ?

Life has not closed in darkness
Because a day has died :
To-morrow waits behind the hill,
And still the world is wide !

RECOGNITION

THERE was no magic once in Shakespeare's name ;
 No place of pride was his beside the proud ;
 No pomp of heraldry with trumpets loud
Rumoured his praise before him as he came :
He passed with little honour or acclaim,
 A common man among the common crowd ;
 Yet was with lordship over life endowed,
And wears by right divine his crown of fame.

The greatest kings are never known as kings ;
 The gods come not in shapes of power or dread,
 But clothed in flesh, the sport of time and fate :
Not till they rise and go—some flash of wings,
 Some sudden vision of the crownéd head,
 Humbles our hearts, and makes us wise too late.

VICTORY

ONCE, stumbling to his goal through dust and heat,
Wounded and bleeding, slandered and denied,
The chief of Conquerors fell as in defeat :
It was not Cæsar whom they crucified.

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

I PAUSED without, what time the organ pealed
The last laudations of a rapturous hymn,
And lingering where upon the twilight dim
The storied windows, rich with warmth, revealed
A pitying Christ 'mid humble shapes that kneeled,
Heard the punctilious priest intone a grim
Creed-curse of some dead, earthly sanhedrim
As if it opened all that God has sealed.

Not mine that perfect faith which strangely soothes
The world's disquiet where it enters in,
And yet I bear, through every night of doubt,
A heart that rests content in simple truths :
No door, O Priest ! shuts all God's light within,
His stars are with me in the dark without.

THE GOAL

W HETHER at last we reach a Heaven above
Or grope to sunless glooms of deepest Hell—
Surely the Lord of Life, whose name is Love,
Is Lord of Death as well !

And some of us have need of only Night,
And some of Day who here but darkness knew :
By darkness those shall burgeon, these by light,
As stars and lilies do :

The spirit marred by suffering and defeats
Shall by the joy of Heaven be made whole ;
Whom the world's summers stifled with their sweets,
Hell shall restore his soul.

CITY SONGS

Nay, though the end be silence blind and drear—

A sleep untouched by thought of any past—

Have we but braved this war of Life to fear

The peace of Death at last ?

A CITY GARDEN

I KNOW a garden most forget,
An ancient garden small and fair,
That seems a little heaven on earth
Within a gaunt and crumbling Square :
It smiles among the roaring streets,
A hidden nook, alone, apart,
A cage that's full of country dreams
Caught in the sombre City's heart.

The garden, when its twinkling flowers
Are jewelled by some April sky,
Brightens, a chartered treasure ground
That snares the loitering passer-by ;
And in the centre, where the grass
A fairy circle round it weaves,
A slender elm tree leaps and spreads—
A fountain falling back in leaves.

CITY SONGS

For miles around, the City throbs
And through the archway from the street
Blow rumours from an outer world :
The eager fret of hurrying feet,
The surly groan and drone of wheels
And muffled murmur of the throng—
All mingling to a sealike tone
That swells and surges all day long.

On sunny eves the dingy Square
Is touched to softest lights and glooms ;
Its dull and dusty windows shine,
And on the lawn among the blooms
The City's pallid children play
With happy laughter clear and shrill,
Like daylight elves of years foregone
Haunting their old-world pleasaunce still.

Till in the dusk the setting sun
Flares from the topmost window-panes,
And fades, and leaves them blank and cold ;
And in the rooms no life remains,
And in the silent height the stars,
The golden flowers of night, unclose,

While the last bloom of sunset falls,
Like the last petal from a rose.

Then echoing all across the Square
Rare steps of some lone worker sound,
And from the emptying streets a wind
Strays sighing through the garden-ground,
And lonely stand the slumbrous trees,
And lonely spreads the dreaming lawn,
As if the elves of daylight slept
In folded bud and leaf till dawn.

HYMN AFTER BATTLE

I

LORD of the conquered land we gain,
Lord of the foe our hands have slain !
Glory to Thee amidst the dead
That Thou hast still Thy people led
To shatter thus, O Lord benign,
This people that was also Thine.

Lord of our high triumphant state,
Lord of the hearths made desolate !
Shall they not praise Thee, they that rue
Beside those hearths the dead we slew ?
Yea, at Thine altar let them bow,
God of their dead and them art Thou !

Lord of our silence and our speech !
 While to Thy throne our hymns upreach,
 Surely each blackening wound that gapes
 Here in these broken human shapes
 Mouths but its praise of all Thy powers !
 Thou wert their God no less than ours.

II

Yet is it well that we or they
 Remould our fathers' god of clay ?
 Yet is it well that from his sleep
 The savage in our blood should leap
 To flatter from this reeking sod
 Some memory of his primal god ?

Nay, we were best be mute and raise
 No blasphemy of boastful praise,
 Scatter no incense on the air,
 Nor lift our reddened hands in prayer,
 But dig the earth our steps defame
 And hide these trophies of our shame.

Silence the braggart lips that call
 The brute which slumbers in us all

CITY SONGS

Back to the ravening triumph foul
Of rending claws and bloody jowl!—
Lest we forget the heights sublime,
And lapse into our ancient slime.

DISTANCE

(Written in Wartime)

S TILL from far off, the listening spirit hears
A music of the spheres ;
Though heard too close their sweet accord may round
To one gross roll of sound.

And War, that with its thunderous gloom and gleam
Storms through our days, may seem,
By peaceful hearths, in some far-coming year,
A music that was discord heard too near.

The soul of Beauty walks with aspect sad,
And not in beauty clad ;
And when God's angels come, their passing by
Blinds us like light too nigh.

CITY SONGS

But the too-dazzling day that dims our sight
Leads us when all its light
Is gathered in Night's lifted hands afar,
Orbed to the still perfection of a star.

THE DAY BEYOND

WHEN youth is with us, all things seem
But lightly to be wished and won ;
We snare to-morrow in a dream,
And take our toll for work undone :
“ For life is long, and time a stream
That sleeps and sparkles in the sun—
What need of any haste ? ” we say,
“ To-morrow’s longer than to-day.”

And when to-morrow shall destroy
That heaven of our dreams, in vain
Our hurrying manhood we employ
To build the vanished bliss again ;
We have no leisure to enjoy :
“ So few the years that yet remain,
So much to do, and ah ! ” we say,
“ To-morrow’s shorter than to-day.”

But when our hands are worn and weak,
And still our labours seem unblest,
And time goes past us like a bleak
Last twilight waning to the west :
“ It is not here—the bliss we seek,
Too brief is life for happy rest ;
What need of any haste ? ” we say,
“ To-morrow’s longer than to-day.”

AT PARTING

SO, with a last good-bye,
In this grey hour you die
To us, as we to you ;
Parting is dying too,
And distance, heart to heart despairing saith,
Is but a name for Death.

To-morrow we shall say,
“ Our thoughts reflect to-day
His quiet room upstairs,
The lonely look it wears,
And all the house is desolate and dim
With want of only him.”

What household things shall stand
Hallowed, because your hand
Has touched them ! We shall miss
Your help in that or this,

And treasure even trivial words you said
As memories of the dead.

You will bear with you thus
Remembrances of us ;
And, writing now and then
Of stranger lands and men,
Your tidings from afar will reach us here
As from another sphere ;

Just as if you, at last,
That greater sea had passed
Whose winds and waters yearn
Outward and never turn,
And, looking through the waste of silence lone,
You called from the Unknown.

Death may be nothing more
Than opening of a door
Through which men pass away,
As stars into the day,
And we who see not, blinded by the light,
Sigh, " They are lost in night ! "

Though while we say Farewell
The word's a passing knell,
Still, ripening year by year,
Life triumphs there as here,
Nor dark nor silent would the distance be
Could we but hear and see.

IN EXILE

THOUGH yet no blossom stars the hedge, nor light
Of daisies twinkles from the barren lawn,
Here is no death for, like the sun by night,
Spring waits below the earth her hour of dawn.

But cold to this mute life that never dies,
This dull, indifferent Nature old and dread,
Under these leafless boughs and alien skies
I wander ghost-like from a life that's dead :

That's dead to me, self-banished from the ways
Whose walls hold all of heaven I have known,
Whose phantoms haunt me through my nights and days
With unforgotten touch, and look, and tone.

I tread no more the city that I love,
And though its far-off streets are peopled yet
And roofed with their grey strips of sky above,
For me they only live in my regret—

Those roaring streets that glared in sunny noons,
And gloomed in lamp-lit eves of plashy rain,
Or slept enchanted under dreamful moons—
Their life goes on without me ; and in vain

I strive elsewhere to gather aught of good,
To quite forget them dwelling here apart,
I cannot make them strangers if I would,
Nor close my ears against them, nor my heart :

Old echoes wakening from the stones I trod
Call to me with a human voice, and then
I sadden in these lonely fields of God,
Grown home-sick for the crowded world of men.

FINIS

O NLY a week ago
We were dreaming, he and I,
Under a starlit sky,
With the village a-dream below,
Its curtained windows here and there alight,
Glimmering half asleep in the deep gulf of
night.

“They live, those plodding hinds,”
He said in his eager way,
“As day by drowsy day
And year after year unwinds—
They eat, and slave, and sleep, and meanly
live
Such lives as God to worms, or trees, or sheep
may give.

“ I could not stagnate here,
 So cramped in this village fold,
 Placidly growing old
Year by monotonous year :
I must be in the thickest of the strife,
Tasting the bitter salt, feeling the sting of
 Life.”

He laughed, and talked of Love ;
 Talked like a happy god
 Who need but wish, and nod,
Or lean from his heaven above
And speak the word to let his will be known,
And all his heart desired should straightway
 be his own.

“ Let's be content and smile
 Whether we're last or first,”
 I said, “ for, best or worst,
It lasts such a little while :
We who fail and lose, and you who have won
Dance as our strings are pulled, and soon the
 play is done.

" See how the strong grow weak,
 And how the young," said I,
 " Before the aged die,
 And the humble and the meek
 By happy chance inherit all the gain
 That mightier, haughtier spirits strove to
 grasp in vain ! "

" We are puppets, then ? " he cried,
 " Some subtle, capricious Fate
 Fashions us small or great ? "
 And he flicked the thought aside :
 " We are our own Fates—Life is ours, who still
 Can let it run to waste, or shape it as we
 will."

Night's hooded shadows came
 Anear with silent tread ;
 He had been born, he said,
 For Power, and Wealth, and Fame ;
 No danger of the road could daunt his soul
 Which bridged all gulfs that yawned betwixt
 him and his goal.

He saw to-morrow bright
 Before it dawned ; his hours
 Were sweet with next year's flowers
A week ago. . . . To-night,
The moon that snows the churchyard with
 her beams
Heaps a new mound—and sleep has ended
 all his dreams.

T H R E N O S

THERE is nothing so beautiful now
As it used to be :

Something has gone from the grass

And the flower, and the tree,

Gone, as your love and your life

Are gone from me—

And there's nothing so beautiful now

As it used to be.

Youth, with its faith in itself,

And its hopes divine,

Youth that is filled with delight,

As the grape with wine,

Youth, like the moon from the night,

Has gone from me,

And there's nothing so beautiful now

As it used to be.

You, and the dreams that we dreamed,

Are dust in earth ;

There are tears in the music that once

Held nothing but mirth ;

I know there is death in the world

In all I see,

And there's nothing so beautiful now

As it used to be.

THE WEAVER

TIME sits in silence, patient at his loom,
And throws untired his shuttles of moon and
sun,
And weaves with flying strands of dark and light,
And weaves again for ever as it wanes,
His pageant of the living hours that die :
Night treading lonely through a land of sleep ;
Dawn that has dreams of Night within her eyes ;
Day with the bloom of Morning on her cheeks ;
Day flushed from labour in the stress of Noon ;
And Eve whose eyes are sad with thoughts of
Day.

And circling in the dazzle and the dark,
In all the ever fading, growing gloom
And glory, swings the clamorous world of men :

Clamour of Peace, who sows her happy fields
Or feasts with all her sons at harvest-home ;
Of War, that wields his lightnings like a god
And thunders god-like from his clouds, and showers
His red rain on the fields that Peace has sown ;
Of Joy, who brims his cup and shouts his songs,
Exultant in a bubble-heaven that bursts ;
Of Death, who snows his winter where he will
And walks amid a wailing as of winds ;
Of Hope, who, blinded by his first sun-rise,
Waits for the slow to-morrow, and dies to-day ;
Of Love, whose earth and hell and heaven are one ;
Of Loss, that whimpers at the heels of Love ;
Of Pity, and Hate, of Anguish, and Despair—

Clamour of all the voices of the world
Moan to him like a murmur of his loom,
But heedless whether men may laugh or weep,
And careless ever though they live or die,
Time sits in silence at his spanless web
And throws untired his shuttles of moon and sun
And weaves anew his pageant as it wanes :
Dawn that has dreams of Night within her eyes ;

CITY SONGS

Day with the bloom of Morning on her cheeks ;
Day flushed from labour in the stress of Noon ;
And Eve whose eyes are dim with thoughts of Day ;
And Night who loiters saddening still for Dawn.

THE LITTLE SISTER OF
THE POOR

A MID the City's dust and din
Your patient feet have trod ;
Wherever sorrow is, or sin,
You do the work of God.

You seem in many a shadowed place
A glory from above,
The peace of Heaven in your face,
And in your heart its love.

Your brow is lined with others' cares
And aches for others' needs ;
You bless the dying with your prayers,
The living with your deeds ;

You sow the wayside hope that lives
Where else were only dearth ;
Your love is like the rain that gives
Heaven's secret to the earth.

CITY SONGS

The pitying thoughts that fill your eyes
And rob your years of rest,
That lead you still where misery sighs
And life is all unblest,

Are as the tears that angels shed
O'er darkened lives forlorn :
Stars in the gloom till night has fled,
And dew on earth at morn.

POSSESSION

WHEN all my thoughts, far-ranging though
they be,
Are gathered up in one great thought of rest,
And in my eyes you see
Such light as wanes each evening from the west ;

When, calm with age, I hear a winter fill
The trees with sighing ere their leaves are sere,
And my hair whitens o'er, as darkness will,
Touched by dim glimmerings of a Day that's near :

I shall not wish that God would give me back
The past with all its hours of sun and rain,
That I, in the old track,
Might plod, and live the long years through again ;

I shall go on, content, nor fret my heart
With any thought of all I leave undone,
Nor, having worked till night and played my part,
Shall stoop to count how much I've lost or won.

CITY SONGS

What can we win or lose but Life ? No powers,
No pomp nor pride that wealth or birth can lend,
Nothing of all is ours
That we must lose for ever at the end.

This that is Me ; these made by Love alone
Mine in that inner life which cannot die—
Since this and these are all that is my own,
I shall lose nothing still while I am I.

R E M E M B R A N C E

I F you were gone, and any anodyne
Could drown in deep forgetfulness benign
All thought of all things past,
Until, at last,
I had forgotten too
Even the dearest memory of you—

In some bleak hour betwixt the dawn and day,
When I awoke to feel how lone and grey
The years before me spread,
Then from the dead
Those memories would upstart,
And one—the thought of you—would break my heart.

THE CLOSED DOOR

AMONG the crowd, I pace apart
The way that I was wont to go
Ere yet the years had taught my heart
The things youth cannot know :
I ghost-like here my footprints see
On stones that have forgotten me.

Here, where I came each day at morn,
Whence every night I homeward went,
The best of all my hopes were born,
And here their gold was spent :
The street is filled with dreams of mine
As some old flask with mellowing wine.

I found the world in this grey street,
Nor yearned to roam with wearying feet

In search of all that life can give,
And die still seeking how to live ;
All—all that life can give I found
Within the City's narrower round.

I have not won the goal I sought ;
 Poor I shall live, and poor shall die ;
But I am rich in joys unbought :
 In love that none can buy,
In larger sight that sees no loss
In losing childish gauds and dross.

And passing the familiar door,
Could I go in, and thus once more
Return into my past, and be
Still as when last it closed on me—
My losses so the years requite
I would not enter if I might.

YOUTH

YOUTH being spent, but not the dreams of youth,
Life has lost nothing of its earlier fire :
The pale star newly risen fades not quite
As the dusk deepens round it into night,
But shines with gathering light and mounts the higher.
Age is but youth's grey husk, if it enfold
Still the unconquered heart of hope and truth
Whose youth, outlasting youth,
Can keep us young though years have made us old.

But when our aims reach farther than our hands,
And heavy seems our toil at last, and vain,
And dearer all we never gained than all
We garnered : then, with Hope's clear clarion call
Hushed on the height, our youth begins to wane
And we grow old, who else had time defied,
And, growing old, endure no longer then,
But leave our lives, as men
Tired with long travel lay their loads aside.

If we had faith in death we should have faith
In life, and age could touch our hearts no more ;
The sorrow-haunted world, whose restless moan
Yearns saddening up to heaven like the lone
Long surge of waters on a barren shore,
Might laugh and labour with a heart at rest
And pass unfaltering, knowing, strangely wise,
Though sweet this life that dies,
It is not all—it is not even best.

THE HAUNTED CITY

SOME heart's remembrance and regret
Fill every street with life profound :
This corner where of old we met
To me has since been hallowed ground ;
I never pass in sun or rain
Now, but I meet you here again.

We cannot go from where we dwell
And leave behind no lingering trace ;
Where in the past our shadows fell
Some shadow of us haunts the place ;
Returning now, ourselves may there
Disturb those ghosts of what we were.

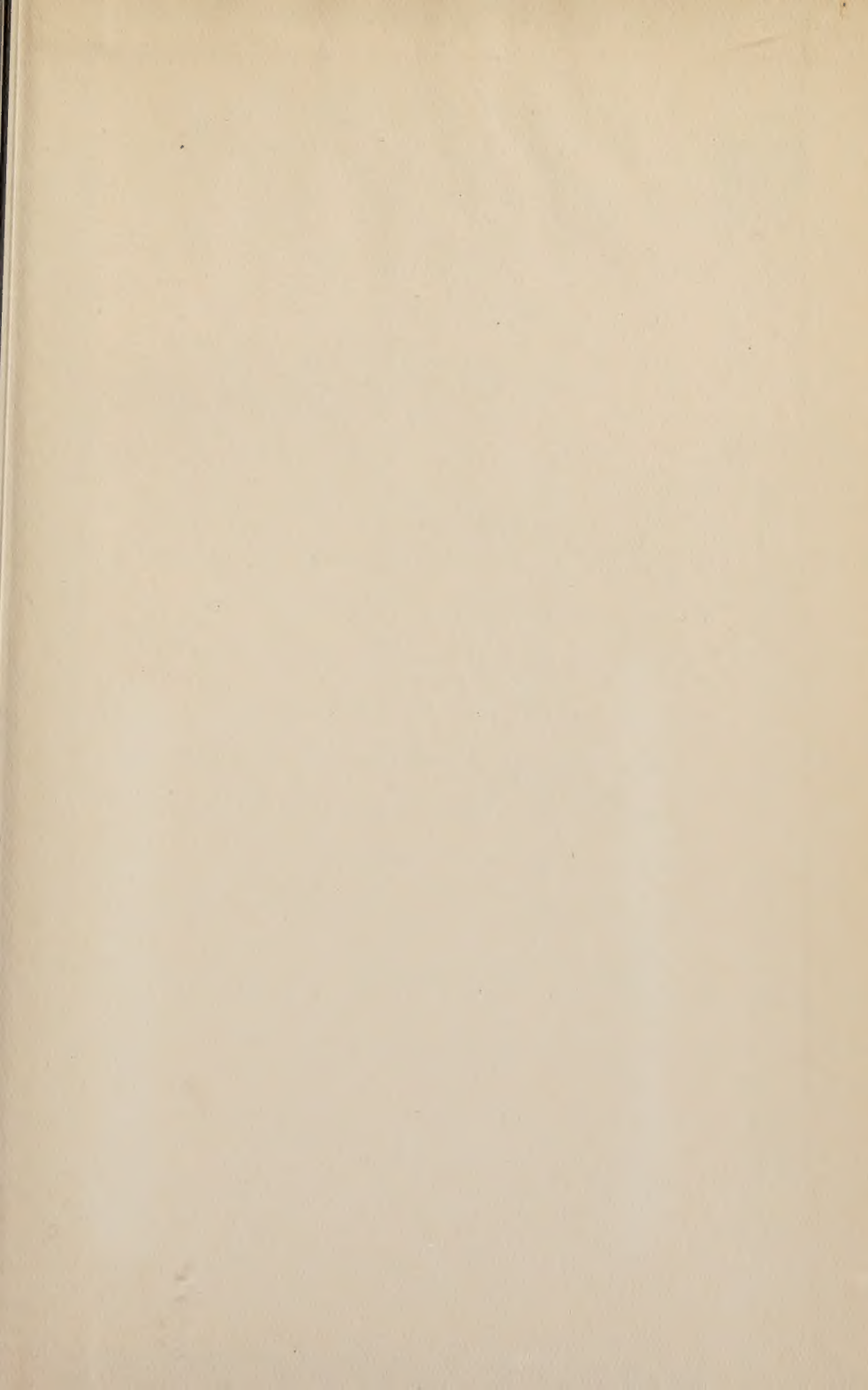
The stones are thrilled by many a tread
That leaves no footprint where it strays ;

Shades of the living and the dead

In silence throng the noisy ways :
Here, where I meet in shower or shine
Your ghost, you haply meet with mine.

The air has sounds we cannot hear,

Is dim with shapes we cannot see ;
Though dear the living voice, and dear
The sight of living faces be,
One dearer yet than all goes by,
Unheard, that none can see but I



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